

Home health and personal care aides is expected to be one of the fastest growing occupations through the year 2008.

The number of people in their seventies and older is projected to rise substantially. This age group is characterized by mounting health problems requiring some assistance. Also, there will be an increasing reliance on home care for patients of all ages. This trend reflects several developments: Efforts to contain costs by moving patients out of hospitals and nursing facilities as quickly as possible, the realization that treatment can be more effective in familiar surroundings rather than clinical surroundings, and the development and improvement of medical technologies for in-home treatment.

In addition to jobs created by the increase in demand for these workers, replacement needs are expected to produce numerous openings. Turnover is high, a reflection of the relatively low skill requirements, low pay, and high emotional demands of the work. For these same reasons, many people are unwilling to perform this kind of work. Therefore, persons who are interested in this work and suited for it should have excellent job opportunities, particularly those with experience or training as home health, personal care, or nursing aides.

Earnings

Median hourly earnings of home health and personal care aides were \$7.58 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$6.41 and \$8.81 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$5.73 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$10.51 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest number of home health aides in 1997 were as follows:

Home health care services	\$8.00
Hospitals	7.90
Personnel supply services	7.70
Residential care	7.20
Individual and family services	7.20

Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest number of personal and home care aides in 1997 are shown below:

Local government, except education and hospitals	\$8.00
Job training and related services	7.30
Residential care	7.20
Individual and family services	7.00
Home health care services	6.00

Most employers give slight pay increases with experience and added responsibility. Aides are usually paid only for the time worked in the home. They normally are not paid for travel time between jobs. Most employers hire only "on-call" hourly workers and provide no benefits.

Related Occupations

Home health and personal care aide is a service occupation combining duties of health workers and social service workers. Workers in related occupations that involve personal contact to help or instruct others include attendants in children's institutions, childcare attendants in schools, child monitors, companions, nursing aides, nursery school attendants, occupational therapy aides, nursing aides, physical therapy aides, playroom attendants, and psychiatric aides.

Sources of Additional Information

General information about training and referrals to State and local agencies about opportunities for home health and personal care aides, a list of relevant publications, and information on national certification are available from:

☛ National Association for Home Care, 228 7th St. SE., Washington, DC 20003. Internet: <http://www.nahc.org>

For information about a career as a home health aide and schools offering training, contact:

☛ National Association of Health Career Schools, 2301 Academy Dr., Harrisburg, PA 17112.

Preschool Teachers and Child-Care Workers

(O*NET 31303 and 68038)

Significant Points

- About 40 percent of preschool teachers and child-care workers—more than 4 times the proportion for all workers—are self-employed; most of these are family child-care providers.
- A high school diploma and little or no experience are adequate for many jobs, but training requirements vary from a high school diploma to a college degree.
- Employment growth, high turnover, and relatively low training requirements will make it easy to enter this occupation.

Nature of the Work

Preschool teachers and child-care workers nurture and teach preschool children—age 5 or younger—in child-care centers, nursery schools, preschools, public schools, and family child-care homes. These workers play an important role in a child's development by caring for the child when parents are at work or away for other reasons. Some parents enroll their children in nursery schools or child-care centers primarily to provide them with the opportunity to interact with other children. In addition to attending to children's basic needs, these workers organize activities that stimulate the children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth. They help children explore their interests, develop their talents and independence, build self-esteem, and learn how to behave with others.

Preschool teachers and child-care workers spend most of their day working with children. However, they do maintain contact with parents or guardians, through informal meetings or scheduled conferences, to discuss each child's progress and needs. Many preschool teachers and child-care workers keep records of each child's progress and suggest ways that parents can increase their child's learning and development at home. Some preschools and child-care centers actively recruit parent volunteers to work with the children and participate in administrative decisions and program planning.

Most preschool teachers and child-care workers perform a combination of basic care and teaching duties. Through many basic care activities, preschool teachers and child-care workers provide opportunities for children to learn. For example, a worker who shows a child how to



Preschool teachers and child-care workers use playful activities to teach young children.

tie a shoe teaches the child and also provides for that child's basic care needs. Preschool and child-care programs help children learn about trust and gain a sense of security.

Children at this age learn mainly through play. Recognizing the importance of play, preschool teachers and child-care workers build their program around it. They capitalize on children's play to further language development (storytelling and acting games), improve social skills (working together to build a neighborhood in a sandbox), and introduce scientific and mathematical concepts (balancing and counting blocks when building a bridge or mixing colors when painting). Thus, a less structured approach is used to teach preschool children, including small group lessons, one-on-one instruction, and learning through creative activities, such as art, dance, and music.

Interaction with peers is an important part of a child's early development. Preschool children are given an opportunity to engage in conversation and discussions, and learn to play and work cooperatively with their classmates. Preschool teachers and child-care workers play a vital role in preparing children to build the skills they will need in elementary school. (A statement on teacher assistants—who aid classroom teachers—appears elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Preschool teachers and child-care workers greet children as they arrive, help them remove outer garments, and select an activity of interest. When caring for infants, they feed and change them. To ensure a well-balanced program, preschool teachers and child-care workers prepare daily and long-term schedules of activities. Each day's activities balance individual and group play and quiet and active time. Children are given some freedom to participate in activities in which they are interested.

Helping to keep children healthy is an important part of the job. Preschool teachers and child-care workers serve nutritious meals and snacks and teach good eating habits and personal hygiene. They ensure that children have proper rest periods. They spot children who may not feel well or show signs of emotional or developmental problems and discuss these matters with their supervisor and the child's parents. In some cases, preschool teachers and child-care workers help parents identify programs that will provide basic health services.

Early identification of children with special needs, such as those with behavioral, emotional, physical, or learning disabilities, is important to improve their future learning ability. Special education teachers often work with these preschool children to provide the individual attention they need. (Special education teachers are covered in a separate statement in the *Handbook*.)

Working Conditions

Preschool facilities include private homes, schools, religious institutions, workplaces where employers provide care for employees' children, and private buildings. Individuals who provide care in their own homes are generally called family child-care providers. (Child-care workers who work in the child's home are covered in the statement on private household workers found elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Watching children grow, enjoy learning, and gain new skills can be very rewarding. While working with children, preschool teachers and child-care workers often improve the child's communication, learning, and other personal skills. The work is never routine; new activities and challenges mark each day. However, child care can be physically and emotionally taxing, as workers constantly stand, walk, bend, stoop, and lift to attend to each child's interests and problems.

To ensure that children receive proper supervision, State or local regulations may require certain ratios of workers to children. The ratio varies with the age of the children. Child development experts generally recommend that a single caregiver be responsible for no more than 3 or 4 infants (less than 1 year old), 5 or 6 toddlers (1 to 2 years old), or 10 preschool-age children (between 2 and 5 years old).

The working hours of preschool teachers and child-care workers vary widely. Child care centers are usually open year round with long hours so that parents can drop off and pick up their children before and after work. Some centers employ full-time and part-time staff with staggered shifts to cover the entire day. Some workers are unable to

take regular breaks during the day due to limited staffing. Public and many private preschool programs operate during the typical 9- or 10-month school year, employing both full-time and part-time workers. Preschool teachers may work extra unpaid hours each week on curriculum planning, parent meetings, and occasional fundraising activities. Family child-care providers have flexible hours and daily routines, but may work long or unusual hours to fit parents' work schedules.

Turnover in this occupation is high. Many preschool teachers and child-care workers leave the occupation temporarily to fulfill family responsibilities, study, or for other reasons. Some workers leave permanently because they are interested in pursuing another occupation or because of dissatisfaction with long hours, low pay and benefits, and stressful conditions.

Employment

Preschool teachers and child-care workers held about 1.3 million jobs in 1998. Many worked part time. About 4 out of 10 preschool teachers and child-care workers are self-employed, most of whom are family child-care providers.

Over 60 percent of all salaried preschool teachers and child-care workers are found in child-care centers and preschools, and about 14 percent work for religious institutions. The remainder work in other community organizations and in State and local government. Some child-care programs are for-profit centers; some of these are affiliated with a local or national chain. Religious institutions, community agencies, school systems, and State and local governments operate non-profit programs. About 2 percent of private industry establishments operate on-site child-care centers for the children of their employees.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

The training and qualifications required of preschool teachers and child-care workers vary widely. Each State has its own licensing requirements that regulate caregiver training, ranging from a high school diploma, to community college courses, to a college degree in child development or early childhood education. Some States require continuing education for workers in this field. However, State requirements are often minimal. Often, child-care workers can obtain employment with a high school diploma and little or no experience. Local governments, private firms, and publicly funded programs may have more demanding training and education requirements.

Some employers prefer to hire preschool teachers and child-care workers with a nationally recognized child-care development credential, secondary or postsecondary courses in child development and early childhood education, or work experience in a child-care setting. Other schools require their own specialized training. Public schools typically require a bachelor's degree and State teacher certification. Teacher training programs include a variety of liberal arts courses, courses in child development, student teaching, and prescribed professional courses, including instruction in teaching gifted, disadvantaged, and other children with special needs.

Preschool teachers and child-care workers must be enthusiastic and constantly alert, anticipate and prevent problems, deal with disruptive children, and provide fair but firm discipline. They must communicate effectively with the children and their parents, as well as other teachers and child-care workers. Workers should be mature, patient, understanding, and articulate, and have energy and physical stamina. Skills in music, art, drama, and storytelling are also important. Those who work for themselves must have business sense and management abilities.

Opportunities for advancement are limited in this occupation. However, as preschool teachers and child-care workers gain experience, some may advance to supervisory or administrative positions in large child-care centers or preschools. Often these positions require additional training, such as a bachelor's or master's degree. Other workers move on to work in resource and referral agencies, consulting with parents on available child services. A few workers become involved in policy or advocacy work related to child care and early childhood education. With a bachelor's degree, preschool teachers may become certified to teach in public schools

at the kindergarten, elementary, and secondary school levels. Some workers set up their own child-care businesses.

Job Outlook

Employment of preschool teachers and child-care workers is projected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2008. In addition, many preschool teachers and child-care workers leave the occupation each year for other jobs, family responsibilities, or other reasons. High turnover, combined with job growth, is expected to create many openings for preschool teachers and child-care workers. Qualified persons who are interested in this work should have little trouble finding and keeping a job.

Future employment growth of preschool teachers and child-care workers will be rapid, but nevertheless considerably slower than in the last two decades because demographic changes that fueled much of the past enrollment growth are projected to slow. Labor force participation of women of childbearing age will increase very little and this group of women will decline as a percentage of the total labor force. Also, the number of children under 5 years of age is expected to rise very little by the year 2008. Nevertheless, the proportion of youngsters enrolled full- or part-time in child-care and preschool programs is likely to continue to increase, spurring demand for preschool teachers and child-care workers. Changes in perceptions of preprimary education may lead to increased public and private spending on child care. If more parents believe that some experience in center based care and preschool is beneficial to children, enrollment will increase. Government policy often favors increased funding of early childhood education programs and that trend should continue. The growing availability of government-funded programs may induce some parents to enroll their children in center-based care and preschool who otherwise would not. Some States also are increasing subsidization of the child-care services industry in response to welfare reform legislation. This reform may cause some mothers to enter the work force during the projection period as their welfare benefits are reduced or eliminated.

Earnings

Pay depends on the educational attainment of the worker and establishment type. Although the pay is generally very low, more education means higher earnings in some cases. Median annual earnings of preschool teachers were \$17,310 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$13,760 and \$22,370. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$12,000 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$30,310. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of preschool teachers in 1997 were as follows:

Elementary and secondary schools	\$23,300
Individual and family services	18,800
Social services, not elsewhere classified	17,900
Civic and social associations	17,300
Child day care services	15,700

Median hourly earnings of child-care workers were \$6.61 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$5.82 and \$8.13. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$5.49 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$9.65. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of child-care workers in 1997 were as follows:

Residential care	\$7.60
Elementary and secondary schools	7.30
Civic and social associations	6.30
Child day care services	6.00
Miscellaneous amusement and recreation services	5.90

Earnings of self-employed child-care workers vary depending on the hours worked, number and ages of the children, and the location.

Benefits vary, but are minimal for most preschool and child-care workers. Many employers offer free or discounted child care to employees. Some offer a full benefits package, including health insurance and paid vacations, but others offer no benefits at all. Some employers

offer seminars and workshops to help workers improve upon or learn new skills. A few are willing to cover the cost of courses taken at community colleges or technical schools.

Related Occupations

Child-care work requires patience; creativity; an ability to nurture, motivate, teach, and influence children; and leadership, organizational, and administrative skills. Others who work with children and need these aptitudes include teacher assistants, children's tutors, kindergarten and elementary school teachers, early childhood program directors, and child psychologists.

Sources of Additional Information

For information on careers in educating children and issues affecting preschool teachers and child-care workers, contact:

- ☛ National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1509 16th St. NW., Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.naeyc.org>
- ☛ Association for Childhood Education International, 17904 Georgia Ave., Suite 215, Olney, MD 20832-2277.

For eligibility requirements and a description of the Child Development Associate credential, contact:

- ☛ Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 2460 16th St. NW., Washington, DC 20009. Internet: <http://www.cdacouncil.org>

For information about family child care and accreditation, contact:

- ☛ National Association for Family Child Care, 525 SW 5th St., Suite A, Des Moines, Iowa 50309-4501. Internet: <http://www.nafcc.org>

For information on salaries and efforts to improve compensation in child care, contact:

- ☛ Center for the Child Care Workforce, 733 15th St. NW., Suite 1037, Washington, DC 20005. Internet: <http://www.ccw.org>

State Departments of Human Services or Social Services can supply State regulations and training requirements for child-care workers.

Private Household Workers

(O*NET 62031, 62041, 62061, 69999E, and 79999N)

Significant Points

- Demand will far outstrip the supply of workers willing to provide private household services because the work is hard, earnings are low, and benefits and advancement opportunities are few.
- Persons who are interested in and suited for this work should have no trouble finding and keeping jobs.

Nature of the Work

Private household workers clean homes, care for children, plan and cook meals, do laundry, administer the household, and perform numerous other duties. Many types of households of various income levels employ these workers. Although wealthy families may employ a large staff, it is much more common for one worker to be employed in a household where both parents work. Many workers are employed in households having one parent. A number of household workers work part time for two or more employers.

Most household workers are *general house workers* and usually the only worker employed in the home. They dust and polish furniture; sweep, mop, and wax floors; vacuum; and clean ovens, refrigerators, and bathrooms. They may also wash dishes, polish silver, and change and make beds. Some wash, fold, and iron clothes; a few wash windows. Other duties may include looking after a child or an elderly person, cooking, feeding pets, answering the telephone and doorbell, and calling and waiting for repair workers. General house workers may also take clothes and laundry to the cleaners, buy groceries, and do many other errands.

Household workers whose primary responsibility is taking care of children are called *child-care workers*. Those employed on an hourly